



NEWS

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AMBER Alerts Just a Cell Phone Away

CHP and Cell Phone Industry Announce "Opt In" Free Service

(LOS ANGELES) California law enforcement and the cellular phone industry today announced the next step in the expansion of the state's highly successful AMBER Alert system. In 2002, the AMBER Alert Network was created to aid law enforcement in the safe return of child abduction victims. Currently the system includes messages that interrupt broadcast programs, roadside signs by major highways and streamlined notification of law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout.

Today, through a partnership with the wireless telephone industry, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) announced that cell phone users can "opt in" to receive AMBER notifications via text message on their cell phones. The service is free and available to nearly all cell phone users in California. The instructions are now also available on-line in Spanish for the first time.

"California's AMBER Alert Program is the role model for successful partnerships between government, law enforcement, the media and the general public," said Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Dale Bonner.

"This will add thousands of eyes to look for victims and suspects in AMBER Alert cases during those first critical hours of an abduction," said CHP Deputy Commissioner Skip Carter.

Most wireless subscribers can enroll by sending the word "AMBER" followed by a space and their 5-digit ZIP code in a text message to 26237. More than 30 wireless carriers, which serve 96 percent of all U.S. subscribers, offer the Wireless AMBER Alerts program. Cell phone users can also register on-line.

"We believe this is a compelling way to raise awareness about a vitally important child safety tool," said David S. Diggs, Executive Director of The Wireless Foundation, a non-profit organization formed by members of the cellular telephone industry. "We hope everyone signs up for this free service and helps play a crucial role in the safe recovery of an abducted child."

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Since it was formed nearly six years ago, the AMBER Alert program in California is credited with the safe recovery of 148 children.

“It is critical to get the word out within the first three hours of an abduction to have a successful outcome,” said Pasadena Police Chief Bernard Melekian, representing the California Police Chief’s Association.

“Sending AMBER Alerts to people’s cell phones is another valuable tool in law enforcement’s arsenal to save abducted children,” stated Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department Commander Rick Adams, representing the California State Sheriff’s Association.

The free service is the result of a partnership between the Wireless Foundation, CHP, The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, The U.S. Department of Justice and the Advertising Council.

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